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remains of another are carted off to the dead house. For a certain period, though, they serve their purpose. How pleasant to have one's cards printed with the title of "redacteur du *Journal Tel et Tel*" placed tastefully in the left-hand corner. How agreeable to be editor of a periodical without periodicity, of a paper which a few months hence collectors of the curious may search for in vain, so rare will the copies have become. Shortly after the announcement of the death of Lord Lytton, Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to France, a dozen sandwich-men trudged back and forth along the Avenue de l'Opera, bearing, front and rear, immense announcements, on which one read: "*Lord Lytton Ne Lira Plus Les Taches d'Encre!*" The curiosity of every one was at once piqued to know exactly what *Taches d'Encre* meant, who much it cost, where it was to be found, and to avail themselves as early as possible of a pleasure forever lost to his unhappy Lordship. Ugh, malheur! *Taches d'Encre* was nothing more nor less than a new literary review. To-day its adolescent publisher is in the clutches of a huissier, while his ink bottle and paste pot have been attached for debt.

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There are a number of persons in Paris whose business it is to restore old books. The process is one requiring the utmost care, and consequently the prices charged frequently amount to several times the original cost of the volume. Still, your French collector is a most fastidious being; he cannot tolerate ink stains, insignificant names on title pages or torn margins. Accordingly, he never quarrels with the restorer after the work is finished, congratulating himself at having rescued a valuable book from destruction. The enemies of books are many. Heat, damp, careless hands and children are but a few of them; and until these, like the book-worm, can be overcome or restrained, the restorer will still continue to do work cheerily in his dingy shop and the bibliophile grow poorer. But restoration nowadays is carried to extremes, even as Mr. Gaston Feuardent attempted to demonstrate ten years back. A missing title-page, or, in fact, an entire signature, offers no drawbacks to unscrupulous bibliopoles to the ultimate sale of the book. Is your first edition of "The Henriade" imperfect? Take it to Lenoir. He will soon supply the missing sheets by a process and in a manner that will defy detection, counterfeiting even the water-marks in the paper. Duruy will mend the rips and doctor the text of your *édition princeps* of Montaigne, and some other old fossil will, for a few francs, make the volume appear as one from the workshop of Derome.

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There is a legitimate and an illegitimate side to this métier. The right to renew, repair and rebind one's books is a privilege that can be denied to no one. Yet the more the art of restoration is practiced the more will deception exist. The facility with which the handicraft of the old binders, for example, can be duplicated has served to fill unscrupulous booksellers' pockets with ill-gotten gains, and there is no place where one must needs be so wary in that direction as in the French capital. Not that this particular industry does not exist in other cities as well. On the contrary, I used to know a dealer in New York, long since retired from business, who had a regular mill from which he turned out Boyets, Du Seuils, Eves, Le Gascons or Roger Paynes as occasion required. The factory was situated in a garret on Bleeker street, in the same house where I afterwards learned that James Henry Paine, the miser, ended his days. The binder was a Frenchman who had received a good schooling over here, and who did all the work himself—stitching, forwarding and finishing. I one day paid him a visit, at the suggestion of an old bibliographical sharp, who kept what he was pleased to call a "book buyers' heaven," over on the east side of town, and who had seen and admired, though, I am pleased to say, not handled his work. I found the poor wretch half frozen in his miserable den, and offered him some cheap binding. To my surprise he refused the work. He was under contract to his despotic master to make more Padeloups and Pompadours than he could possibly supply, and could fill no other orders. No wonder the market is glutted with such trash.

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A well-known Parisian connaisseur (not you, Monsieur Chauchard) recently paid 11 francs for an original Rembrandt. "Astonishing!" observed a friend, upon inspecting it critically. "Yes," replied the other, "you see if I had given 300,000 francs for it I should have had doubts whether it was from the brush of the famous artist or not. Now no doubt exists!"

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Molière's wife, the actress Armande Béjart, lived in a house at Meudon, near Paris. The habitation still exists, and has been classified among the historic monuments of France. The artiste bought it in 1676, after the death of her husband. Its latest occupant was M. Dulaurier, an erudite Orientalist.

JOHN PRESTON BEECHER.

PARIS, December 20, 1891.

An interesting group of paintings which was exhibited at the Durand-Ruel galleries last month included Jules Dupré, "Pasture at L'Isle Adam;" Ingres, "Cardinal Bibbiena Presenting Raphael to His Niece, Maria Bibbiena;" Corot, "The Pond of Ville d'Avray;" Ziem, "Sunset in Holland;" Ribot, "Mignonne;" "Les Recureuses;" Jongkind, "Windmill at Dor-drecht;" "The Canal at Rotterdam."

## ORIENTAL SOAPSTONE CARVINGS

(Special Correspondence of THE COLLECTOR)

AMOY, China, November 23, 1891.

IN almost every modern drawing-room, there is an ungainly statue or carving in soapstone which, the owner vaguely says, came from Japan, China, or somewhere in the east. Where they really come from is Foo-Chow, which next to Amoy is the largest city in the great province of Fo-Kien. A few are carved in Amoy, Chin Chin-Foo and Canton, out of the soapstone rock which occurs in inexhaustible deposits in the vicinity of Foo-Chow. But neither in quality, much less in quantity, will the output of these three places combined compare with that of the latter city.

The soapstone, or steatite to use a more accurate word, is quarried almost like ordinary building stone. It is singularly free from flaws and blemishes and often comes out in blocks of a cubic yard. The finer kinds come in much smaller pieces. Fineness from a Chinese standpoint is a matter of translucency, color and distribution of shading. No other steatite can compare with this in variety and brilliancy of color. In a collection owned by Capt. John Coombs, of this city, there are objects in black, brown, maroon, carmine, indigo, ultramarine, French-gray, orange, purple, yellow, bistre, sienna and opal. Usually a carving is made in one color, but some are even in polychrome.

The Foo-Chow carvings are famous in China and are found in every city and town. The simplest are basso and alto reliefs upon irregular plaques, ordinary plates and clumsy vases. The figure is "Joss" (the conventional deity), a patron saint, a hero, demigod or dragon. Sometimes, though rarely, the artist is a portrait-cutter, and instead of an imaginary being turns out a very fair representation of a human being. On one occasion I managed to recognize whom it stood for. The carvings of this class are very cheap, ranging from 15 cents upwards. The relief-portraits command anywhere from \$1 to \$5.

A second class are articles of domestic utility, paper-weights, ink-stands, Joss-stick holders, pin-boxes, jewel-cases, pedestals and the like. They are cut in simple geometrical forms, are highly polished and decorated with floral designs, arabesque or serpentine work. They are very inexpensive, costing from 5 cents to one dollar.

A third class consists of statues and animal figures. The Dragon, the Dog of Happiness, the Heavenly Poodle, Buddha, Siva, the Goddess of Mercy, fishes, buffalos and lions are the favorite designs of both maker and buyer. In size the carvings range from a mere toy half an inch high to handsome pieces of one or two feet square. There is a wider range of prices, a rough "dragonnette" bringing a few coppers, while a large and well-executed Goddess of Mercy is quickly disposed of at \$40 to \$50.

A fourth class is essentially Chinese. They call it a "dramatic picture." It is a brave attempt to do in one piece of stone what Cellini did in a dozen panels of metal-work. The stone taken as a whole is carved into a conventional mountain with impossible roads, viaducts and caverns. At every point which pleases the artist's fancy is carved a human figure. They are out of perspective and out of proportion in every respect.

Two warriors, for example, are fighting on a bridge whose timbers are like matches. Two lovers are trembling in a cavern, while the girl's father, as large as a baby, confronts them at the entrance. A horse whose head is larger than his trunk, is about to be devoured by a dragon, the size of a kitten. So the incongruities run on. Despite the ludicrous unnaturalness, the workmanship excites admiration. The infinite patience with detail, the enormous labor expended upon the work and the handsome chromatic effect from the well-chosen colors of the steatite are worthy of a higher and nobler art. These "dramatic pictures" are not over costly. They range from \$1 to \$25 apiece.

The native artist is a poorly-paid fellow. He is satisfied with 35 cents a day, while his apprentices are delighted with twenty and even much less. They belong to a powerful guild which has a history of ten centuries and are as proud of their art as an R. A. is of his endeavors with the brush. Were the American public familiar with these curious products, a good trade could be established between the two lands. As it stands there is an interesting field open to the collector of bric-à-brac, of which the great world knows little or nothing.

EDWARD BEDLOE.

Last May an eminent German writer on art, Dr. Anton Springer, died in Leipzig, leaving behind him a great accumulation of books in all languages, gathered by him in the prosecution of his literary labors. His library, while rich in many directions, is, undoubtedly, the most extensive and valuable in art-books ever formed, and it is offered to be broken up at private sale by Joseph Baer & Co., Rossmarkt 18, Frankfort-on-Main, Germany, from whom priced catalogues may be obtained. The first catalogue, applying to painting and engraving, in which nearly 2,000 numbers are enumerated, is now ready for delivery.